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WHAT KIND OF EDUCATION IS BEST SUITED TO BOYS? ¹

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I hope to see an end to debates on the question whether one sex is superior to the other. One might as well debate whether the existence of the lungs or of the heart is the more necessary to life. We do, however, feel that our mothers differ from our fathers, not as two individuals of the same sex, but that there are striking intellectual and emotional differences. We feel glad instead of sorry that our mothers differ from our fathers; but if anyone was to dare raise the question of the inferiority of our mothers, the first impulse of American manhood would be to answer that question with a blow, and the more our mothers differ from our fathers, the harder would probably be that blow.

Some have said that there can be no more "male" or "female" education than "male" or "female" literature. Ask any intelligent librarian who selects reading for adolescents, if he does not recognize differences of sex in making up his reading list, and if he might not call books on big-game hunting and adventure "male" literature. Some objectors frankly grant that there is a difference, but they say: "Educate both in precisely the same way, and you will find that they will assimilate only what their different natures and instincts prompt, just as two vegetables growing side by side will absorb only the elements which each needs." Would any agriculturist claim that it would be wise to give different vegetables exactly the same fertilizer? Could he not rightly claim that one might need more potash, the other more ammonia? Suppose ammonia was used on potatoes, and they absorbed no more of it than their nature permitted, would there be as many and as large potatoes as if the necessary potash had been provided? Might not also a certain amount of the ammonia be wasted?

¹ Read before the Department of Superintendence of the National Educational Association, at Louisville, Ky. February 27, 1906.

If the two sexes differ emotionally, intellectually, and physically, it can hardly be unwise or unscientific for education to recognize whatever differences exist. Boys will never receive the best education, so long as they are taught chiefly by the opposite sex. The majority of the members of the Mosely English Educational Commission, who inspected American schools, said there was occasion to view with alarm the growing preponderance of women teachers. Professor Henry E. Armstrong, F.R.S., says in *THEIR* report:

To put the matter in very simple terms, it seemed to me on the occasion of my former visit — and the impression was confirmed during my recent visit — that the boy in America is not brought up to punch another boy's head, or to stand having his own punched, in a healthy and proper manner ; that there is a strange and indefinable feminine air coming over the men; a tendency toward a common—if I may so call it, a sexless—mode of thought.

Some of the members of this commission said there was a marked contradiction in the liberality of Americans in erecting and equipping magnificent school buildings, and their parsimony in refusing to pay good men teachers enough to instruct their children. Some say that it is better to employ first-rate women than third-rate men. The only possible answer to that reply is that it is better to employ first-rate men as well as first-rate women, and to pay a first-rate price for all who train American manhood. Our people are slower in educational reform than in getting improved machinery, but when we once do realize the importance of the highest type of men teachers, the money will be forthcoming. One boy as a result of better teaching may through his inventiveness and superior grasp of a business give employment to thousands of people, and make the money spent for high-grade masculine teachers the best possible investment for the commonwealth. Of course, it goes without saying that we should have just as many women teachers, and of an equally high grade. At present there is not much but the missionary spirit that will impel our best young men to become and remain secondary teachers. There are now many such missionaries among our high-school instructors, but many years' experience leads me to express the opinion that only third-rate men, if influenced by strictly utilitarian inducements, can afford to remain teachers in the overwhelming majority of our high schools.

In the name of the boy, I protest against the tendency to discour-

age honest rivalry in the school. I doubt whether too much rivalry is necessary or desirable for girls. This question, however, is one for women and evolution to answer. With men, life is a contest, and fortunately most boys love a contest. Those who do not must drop to the rear in the struggle for existence. That tremendous struggle which results in the survival of the fittest, and the consequent improvement of plant and animal and thought product, must continue if life is to progress. It is not the true masculine spirit which says: "Never have honors in a school. Never pit two individuals or sides against each other. Never inquire whether John can do better work than William, but only whether John's present record shows any improvement over his past." If a school for boys is to be conducted on this basis, it will be run out of harmony with the laws of life. If a member of your family had to undergo a grave surgical operation, would you employ Dr. Brown because his record for fatalities was decreasing; or would you ask for the services of Dr. Robinson, who had only half as great a death record? I know the manager of a manufacturing plant who in two years lost 12 per cent. on the capital stock. Although his second year was slightly better than his first, the directors said to him when he argued this improvement: "You forget that we are in competition with other factories in this country and abroad. You forget that these losses will force us to close the factory, throw our workmen out of employment, and cause their children to cry for bread. We shall look for a better manager."

The advocate of a less masculine type of education says: "Contests develop an unsocial spirit and cause hard feelings. For this reason, if for no other, we must avoid them." So Governor Folk was wrong in developing unsocial feelings among the St. Louis grafters! So William Travers Jerome must be asked not to twist the tail of the Tammany Tiger! So even our own David fighting the Goliath of trust and railroad discriminations must be ordered to take the stone out of his sling. So contests are unsocial and must be avoided! Shades of our Puritan and Virginian ancestors! Who wants to be social with the devil? So long as evil exists in its myriad forms, we must develop fighters. The trouble with America today is not that there are too many fighters, but that there are too few Folks and Jeromes and Roosevelts. A keen German critic says:

Their amiable good nature is, in a certain sense, the great virtue of the Americans; in another sense, their great failing. It is actually his good nature which permits him everywhere to overlook carelessness and crookedness, and so opposes with latent resistance all efforts at reform.

Modern psychology has taught educators to build on the instincts of the young. A strong instinct of boyhood, as well as a prime requirement of manhood, is this joy in honest rivalry. A boy's nature responds quickly to all contests which determine the best fellow, whether in running, jumping, shooting, speaking, computing, or in any branch of physical or intellectual achievement where a boy cares to excel. One of the most valuable parts of the curriculum in our high school is the reading aloud each morning for fifteen minutes to the assembled school. In order that the tastes of the teachers may not be too strongly superimposed upon the boys, we sometimes allow them to choose what they will hear. They almost unanimously prefer a bull-fight to a love-story, a Kipling poem of blood to a Tennysonian idyll, a wild tale of war and trial to one full of sentiment and analysis. Some people not only think that such a choice proves the total depravity of boys, but even sigh that the boys are not all girls, and then go to work and make them girls as fast as possible. Now I, for my part, think that if the boys had decided differently, there would have been need of a doctor. It is useless to bewail Huxley's dictum that "what has been decided among prehistoric protozoa cannot be annulled by act of Parliament," or to grow impatient because we must start from a boy's present self and from the dominant interests of boyhood to climb to the heights of courageous and altruistic manhood. It is only by appealing to the naturally strong instincts of the boy that he can be truly led to nobler instincts by the only sure teacher of the heart-strings. I shall never forget the morning that one of our instructors, a manly athletic fellow admired by all the school, read aloud Davis' "Bar Sinister." The dog-fights won the hearts of the boys. Their interest was alive, their emotions were mobile, so that, when the moment came for the strong, clean, prize dog either to desert his old mother, dirty and only a cur of the streets, or to save her by a fight to the death, the boys, one and all, were moved to pity, love, tenderness, and even heroic impulse by the brave fight of that dog hero.

A study of heredity and evolution reminds us of the savage methods adopted by nature to achieve her ends. To improve a species, all weak members must go. To make sure that one individual may survive, a million are born and perhaps sacrificed. There is no compromise, no consideration for the unfit, in the biological world. The Spartan abandoned his weak child on the mountain side. For the last nineteen hundred years the individual has been slowly rising, until today his rights are sacred. Sometimes the most fit in our homes are physically the weakest, those who stand most in need of our protection. In the education of boys, therefore, along with masculine aggressiveness and initiative should be developed a spirit of tenderness and a desire to protect the weak. The successful protector must be strong and resolute, and not easily intimidated; hence courage, strength, and the power to fight must be present in the protector. It is today the strongest nations that are kindest. If a stop is to be put to the mutilation and enslavement of those wretched natives of western Africa by Portugal and Belgium, the interference must come from a nation at once strong and aggressive and tender-hearted. The poorest inhabitant of the Ghetto district in New York City, who has suffered injustice, knows that if he goes in the middle of the night to the home of that prince of fighters, William Travers Jerome, he will be kindly received, and that Jerome will say to him: "You will have justice, or the heavens shall fall."

One of the great influences which for thousands of years have helped to develop sympathy and tenderness in the Aryan race is being rapidly lost to this generation. I think that over 60 per cent. of the members of this association who are now over forty and who have achieved the most, have had some training on a farm, and have consequently come into close contact with domestic animals. These poor creatures must be numbered among the greatest teachers that have helped to raise humanity to a fully civilized state. If one of our early Aryan progenitors treated his domestic animals brutally or even carelessly, he could not succeed beside his more compassionate neighbor, who watched them as if they were his children, and who carried the helpless lamb home in his arms. These domestic animals have helped to give woman her peculiar qualities, because it was she who first attached them to her home, trained them, and cared for

their helpless young. In return for this service, the domestic animals have given to woman a patience and a tenderness half divine.

We must not today lose the services of these animals as teachers in any case where they can be retained. The trolley is making suburban and country life easier, and it will give us back some of our lost teachers. It would be a partial education for every boy to own at least one domestic animal, and to care for it entirely, at first under proper supervision. I remember when, as a young boy, I learned one of the greatest lessons of my life. I found one of my own little chickens beaten down by a hard rainstorm and feebly gasping for breath. I took that chick in my hands, ran with him to the house, wrapped him in flannel, and laid him by the hearth fire. In about half an hour, which seemed an age to me, I heard the little fellow say, "Peep, peep." I gave him some warm food, and as the helpless fellow nestled against my hand, I realized that I had saved him, and I felt the absolute luxury of protecting the weak. I doubt if any man who suddenly made a million dollars ever felt the thrill of a keener pleasure than I then knew. Today I thank every domestic animal that taught me in my boyhood days; every chick, kitten, dog, calf, or colt that needed my care and protection, that shared my companionship, and that gave me glimpses of that ineffable beatitude which has come to me only when I have protected the weak and helped to raise the fallen.

To guard against a purely pedagogical treatment of the education of boys, I recently wrote a large number of letters to business men in various parts of the United States, asking what education should be given to the rank and file of boys, preparatory to successful business of any kind. The replies laid the most emphasis on the ability to write, speak, and spell the English language correctly. One large corporation said:

We notice that slovenly penmen are usually lacking in system, accuracy, and careful methods generally. . . . Public speaking and debating ought to be a prominent part of the course in every high school for boys.

Arithmetic was next stressed. A Louisville corporation informed me that a graduate of my school was refused an excellent place because he did not make well-formed, legible figures. Geography, manual training, and history were declared important subjects. Some manu-

facturers said that every boy who expected to be promoted should also know something of physics and chemistry. Another insisted on adding geometry, which he said should come before algebra. The majority emphasized the importance of the high-school course. "It enables boys to grasp more quickly the problems which confront them." The following expression of opinion would represent not unfairly the attitude of the leading men of affairs throughout the United States.

The more education a boy gets, the more apt is he to discover short-cuts and avenues of saving to which an ordinary mind simply will not address itself.

The most interesting feature of these replies was the emphatic expression of opinion by certain great business corporations that culture studies are of vast importance for boys. This changing opinion deserves attention at the beginning of the twentieth century. I wrote the Baldwin Locomotive Works, a corporation which has about 20,000 employees, to learn its position in regard to culture studies, and I received the following reply, under date of January 17, 1906:

Our ideas in general are that, no matter what may be his subsequent career, it is important for a boy to qualify himself with the broadest and most thorough education possible within the time at his command. The more thorough his mental discipline, the more complete his knowledge of mathematics, the classics, natural philosophy, and other general branches, the better is the foundation on which to build the special knowledge requisite for the specific field which he may decide to enter. It is in accordance with this view that we do not recommend manual training as an education for a boy intending to choose mechanical pursuits for his life-work. We feel that the time which manual training takes from study of the broad foundation branches above mentioned cannot, except at greater labor and cost, be regained later in life. When he enters the mechanical pursuit, his whole mind is concentrated upon it, and he can then achieve, in a few weeks or a few months, progress which is more practical and more valuable than the smattering of mechanical knowledge obtained in a training school.

Following the same principle, we should perhaps take a directly contrary view were the boy to adopt a career outside of mechanics, because then the mechanical training would tend to broaden his faculties and increase his powers of observation, constituting a form of education not likely to be obtained during his later career.

For one of the greatest of the so-called soulless corporations of the world to insist on the value of culture studies for ordinary apprentices marks, let us hope, the beginning of a new epoch. Let

us remember that we shall have to search longer than Diogenes to find a middle-aged man who will bless the parent, teacher, or school official who, by argument or otherwise, deprived him of the chance of taking culture studies and of receiving enjoyment therefrom. Certainly those who have experienced the quality of enjoyment that can come only from culture would be the last to exchange it for a few more dollars and cents. If by a study of astronomy the boy can get more pleasure from looking at the heavens, then let him study astronomy. Even the average workman does not limit his purchases to what is strictly practical. He demands wall-paper and pictures for his home.

All that we can give boys advantageously is such general training in the foundation subjects, such power of initiative, such general culture and moral development, that they can face and solve the most varied problems. A boy almost always finds that his arithmetic never quite fits the special business that he enters. Wholesale dealers wrote letters to me complaining that boys do not at first quickly know "the equivalent in units of $\frac{3}{144}$ of a gross, $\frac{5}{12}$ of a dozen, $\frac{3}{20}$ of a thousand," and that they are puzzled "in figuring discounts based on percentages." Business men have no right to expect that boys will come to them adepts in such special lines of figuring, but they may justly demand that the boys shall have had sufficient mental training to learn how to do quickly what is required. A young tanner, who took chemistry in college, told me that he wished he had studied a different kind of chemistry for his business. Most of us have made the discovery that college did not fit us exactly for anything. I think school and college did a large part of their duty if they enabled us to fit ourselves. We are at last slowly learning the truth that special mastery in any business must come largely through one's own moral and intellectual power to acquire the needed knowledge in connection with experience. Josh Billings was correct in saying: "Success don't consist in never makin' blunders, but in never makin' the same one twict."

We could so train a boy that he would be as accurate as an almanac along given lines, but he would soon be a last year's almanac. Our national census shows that large numbers are forced to change their occupation. Business men say that you cannot run a business

today as it was conducted five years ago. I think that men of affairs will gradually agree with the opinion that education should not early in life cut too deep and unalterable a channel for the stream of thought and action, but should enrich and increase the volume of the stream, leaving the exigency of business life to direct the course.

Foreigners say that Americans of the generation now passing, those brought up on the farm, have led the world in three respects—in the power of initiative, in the habit of relying on themselves, and in will-power. I believe that a decline in the initiative and self-reliance of our boys has already set in, and that it is the duty of every superintendent and principal to ask: "How can my school be so conducted as to increase the spirit of initiative and self-reliance?" I believe that every one of our schools can be improved in this respect.

My experience with the boys of my own school leads me to believe that under present conditions the open-air playground is one of the very best agents to develop initiative, self-reliance, and the social side which makes these qualities valuable. My boys through their own exertions secured an entire square of land four blocks from their school in the heart of the city. They fenced this in, laid out a running-track, tennis courts, baseball diamond, and football gridiron, and also built a clubhouse. Almost everything connected with this park seems to develop self-reliance and social qualities as well as initiative. Since the decline of agriculture and of Elizabethan variety in England, the English have relied largely on their playgrounds to keep the peculiarly Anglo-Saxon qualities from atrophying. Wellington said that he won Waterloo on the playground at Eton. A member of the Mosely Commission expresses surprise that the Americans "are not yet alive to the excellent opportunities for work which the playing-fields afford," and he adds that no amount of physical training under cover can "ever be a satisfactory substitute for free, spontaneous play."

I have heard educators wrangle by the hour over the question whether knowledge of one subject confers any power to deal with subjects outside of its immediate domain. There is one kind of training, however, which fits every business of life equally well. Moral power can be used to attack any of the duties of life, no matter how dissimilar. The United States senator, the life-insurance president,

and the plumber alike need moral training, but this is precisely the training which lags farthest behind. Intellectual culture has substituted more refined and intricate ways of wrong-doing for the clumsy, repellent methods of a thousand years ago. Robbers once held the feet of their victim to the fire to make him give up his property. Now we have the intellectual adroitness necessary to plan stock reorganizations, to juggle expense accounts, and to bribe commonwealths. Great corporations have said in reply to my questions that they are now more than ever before demanding that everyone who is placed in line for promotion shall have character and moral backbone. If they temporarily waive this requirement, they say that experience has taught them that they are providing future trouble for themselves. They want officials who will not gamble, even if they happen to be at Monte Carlo, four thousand miles away from home, or who will not allow an adventuress to break up their homes.

Boys will show the most rapid moral improvement only under the inspiring influence of the best teachers, who keep them marching forward to the music of noble ideals, until that way of marching has become a habit, and a change would cause not only inconvenience, but positive suffering. To his dying day George Washington said: "The mystery of my life is how Benedict Arnold, American-born and bred, could have become a traitor." Let us educators stress the moral side of our work, until we can say: "Our boys may go wrong, but we have trained them so that the first start in that direction will be as unnatural as the love of death."